

TO THE ARGENTINE PEOPLE
TO PEOPLE IN SOLIDARITY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

1/24/77

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Villa Devoto Prison, U-2

Jan. 24, 1977

We Denounce

In the historic moment in which our people fight a heroic fight in the streets, setting up a tenacious resistance in this, the last step in order to gain their definitive and now irreversible national and social liberation.

The military, who sell-out their country, uniformed criminals, subject the people to the most brutal repression ever heard of: Mass assassinations, kidnappings, arrests, concentration camps, prisons, institutionalized torture, all of this is involved in their declared purpose of "annihilating a people". Every type of person is affected: workers, students, churches, unions, press, political parties, families---no one escapes their homicidal madness following the failure of their economic and political project, and their isolation before a world condemning them for their crimes. They employ the force of arms, the only power left to them, to preserve their privileges at the cost of Life, hunger, justice, Peace which our people rightly claim. Our own situation is what we wish to denounce today, a situation characterized as but a part of their integral purpose of annihilation. This is the situation of 1,000 women of the people in the prison of the hateful and shameful dictatorship.

The Legal Order

The majority of the women are held at the disposition of the P.E.N (executive power) and the rest are awaiting justice before coarse military or police processes. We arrive at the prison after the required state of the torture chamber at the Federal Coordination Center, Police Stations, Military Barracks, etc., located throughout the country: days or months submitted to tortures with the electric "picana", suffocation by emersion, violation by the torturers or by mechanical means, the introduction of rats and spiders into our vaginas, bitten by dogs, watching our relatives or our companions die by torture, losing the children in our wombs. Handcuffed, blindfolded humiliated, we arrive at the Unit 2 to begin another stage of suffering. While under the Regime of Decree 2023/74, the illegality of our situation comes to such a point that we are not even allowed to read it, an aberration of justice. Thus our lives are ruled by a law which we are not allowed to read. We are under the jurisdiction of GENERAL SUAREZ MASON, and in the second place, of the Federal Penitentiary Service, under the charge of CORONEL BOTT. The Director of the Penitentiary is the Prefect JUAN CARLOS RUIZ and the Chief of Security, HORACIO MARTIN GALINDEZ. This Penitentiary is located in the heart of Buenos Aires, its the prison chosen to show the international commissions that fight for respect of human rights. Nevertheless, this doesn't prevent them from annihilating us who are found in it. a) Requiring us to live in a vegetative Regime which is causing us to deteriorate both physically and psychologically. We have no guarantees of physical integrity as on those occasions when we have been taken to the Office of Federal Coordination where we have been beaten, the reason for which the prison authorities explain, we are PRISONERS OF WAR.

b) We have been placed in two parts of U-2, Numbers 5 and 6 plus number 46 of the Mothers' section and in the Penal Hospital.

Our General Situation is as follows:

Lawyers:

We don't have any lawyers because those that we had are dead, have disappeared

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

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() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to _____

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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or are arrested. In face of this, professional lawyers don't want to undertake our defense.

Food

It is deficient both in its quantity as well as in its protein content. The diet is made up of stews made with fat, grains, starches, that after a time in the pots, solidifies forming a compact mass. We almost never have fruit. There is a "special diet" for those who are already very sick, that consists, whatever the illness, of a little greasy beef and a few grams of potatoes or swiss chard. The food is prepared without observing even the basic requirements of hygiene. The prison limits the number of "special diets", and it never exceeds this limit, so that the rest of the sick never can get even this minimum right.

Health

Due to the poor nutrition and other things that we will indicate, our health is failing rapidly. Thus 80% of the women have digestive problems, hepatites, gastritis, ulcers and heart trouble, vitamin deficiencies and loss of teeth.

Medical Attention and nurses:

It is lacking both in quantity as well as in quality, and in the negligence with which it is performed. There are no offices for consultation, there are not enough persons, and there is no professional competence. One nurse clearly admitted the character of her attention. MARTA SARAVIA said to us: "Before I am a nurse, I am a prison guard". The hospital of the Penitentiary doesn't have the minimum equipment necessary. The nurses ask the mothers for a thermometer and when that broke it was a long time before we got another. There is no delivery room and the mid-wives in the Sarda Clinic will no longer receive the expectant mothers because the armed guards caused serious problems in the hospitals.

Medicines:

They are not given to us in the Penitentiary. They only have aspirin and a tranquilizer sometimes and some calming injections. We must buy the medicines with our own funds. When medicine is brought after a burocratic delay of a week or even a month, it is given outside of the scheduled time and doesn't produce its desired effect.

Provisions and Packages

They do not permit our relatives to bring food and other things, only certain things for cleaning and clothing. They only allow us to buy cheese, sweets, sugar, milk and some other things, but never anything fresh such as fruits, vegetables or eggs. With all this we try to balance our diet, but it can't be done. It is part of their plan of wearing us down and constant maltreatment, not to let us buy things or to let our families buy us things.

Work

They forbid us to do any manual labor. Work, which is indispensable for any human being, is forbidden us. When we do work at something they punish us severely, and when they find evidence of it: embroidering, carving, knitting, they take it away. They will not even let us make a rag doll for our children.

Recreation:

By order of Decree 2023 it is forbidden to speak in a raised voice, to laugh

or to sing, to put on a play or any other type of entertainment. The only thing permitted is to play chess or dominoes. They punish us for anything else.

Physical Exercise

This is forbidden in the building. Until now we have been able to do exercises in the patio during the hour of outside recreation. That time is insufficient since we must remain immobile and without work 23 hours a day and in bad positions since we lack chairs and tables. And so the problems of arthritis, rheumatism, back trouble are becoming more frequent and more serious.

Outside Recreation

We are permitted to go out into the fresh air one hour a day and this is taken away from us when they wish to punish us. Here also the persons in charge of searches humiliate us. They oblige us to walk in silence, head bowed and with hands clasped behind. Since the guards may apply whatever punishments they want, we may or may not practice gymnasium, speak, laugh or sing, according to their arbitrary desires or state of spirit or commitment with the repression. If it rains they don't take us outside, and they don't make up for it later either. Our health is affected by the need for air and sun and so: premature wrinkles, dried up skin, falling hair, gray hair, skin disorders, failing eyesight (due to not being able to watch distant objects), these are the results which the doctors are noting, and in front of our protests, they say there is nothing they can do, and that Orders are Orders. We accuse them of complicity in the obvious purpose of destroying us. Their part is clearly criminal negligence. The law is clear and they know it.

Spiritual Attention

Until recently there was none at all. Now a priest visits us from time to time, and from behind the bars gives us communion. Mass never. This is prohibited by Decree 2023. We asked for Mass on Christmas, but because we had demanded a doctor for one of our companions who was asphyxiating due to asthma, they didn't give us the Mass. They punished us by depriving us of the Mass. We make no commentary.

Family Relationships

They are very restricted. We are allowed one visit a week of less than an hour in rooms under vigilance, separated by bars. We are not even allowed to embrace our children. In order to see us they wait in lines for 7 or 8 hours. They are submitted to humiliating treatment, and to molesting searches. In the street they are followed, kidnapped, tortured, and killed. The persecution of our families is systematic. Their houses are searched and robbed.

Correspondence

It is censored. We can only write to family members who have all their credentials checked by the prison. It is prohibited to write to our parents, spouses or children detained in other prisons. This is a violation of a principal of natural law, the maintenance of the fundamental cell of human society - the family. It is not right to censor all our incoming and outgoing mail. The mail comes late, it disappears, it is torn and patched up. They want to destroy our spirit, subdue our sentiments and those of our families.

Relationship with the Prison

The treatment by almost all is humiliating. it undermines all our fundamental rights, acts like those of bending our heads, holding our hands behind

our backs, going from one place to another in the prison with our hands tied to our backs with a chain that is used to take us from place to place by the guard, in a symbol of treacherous humiliation and degrading treatment of our kind of persons. These practices, condemned by all the legislation of the world, they use on us shamelessly, those who say they are governing in the name of God and of order and respect. The persons in charge try at times to lessen their own responsibility by attributing everything to the Military, but there are others who assume the project of our destruction as their own. The lower personnel is another victim. Their human persons are being destroyed as they apply the inhuman and criminal regime to us. Some are openly participating, such as the Guard, ESTELA MONTE, auxiliary helper of the 5th cell-block. Who takes upon herself the role of executioner, and insulting, molesting and physically maltreating us, beats up our companions.

Physical Integrity

Those in charge say that they guarantee our lives while we are in the prison in their hands, but should they get an order to kill us they cannot do anything to stop it.

QUESTIONS

12 hours. On 13/11/76 they took prisoners on 13/11/76 to the Security Section, and there blindfolded, hooded, questioned them in detail about their former life, family, sexual relations, children, ideology, studies, literary preferences, etc. The women were taken out at 7 and returned at 15. They say that when the hoods were placed on them they heard that they were to be shot, and one of them begged that it be taken off. Violence and terror is our climate here.

Sanctions

They are arbitrary and do not correspond to any order that we can understand. They can take away our visits, recreation, correspondence, for any reason: running, singing, looking out the window or doing some handwork (knitting, etc.), depending also upon the state of spirit of the guards. Law 2023 allows everything. The most serious sanction is the Punishment Cell. These are on the 5th floor of building 5, small places 12 x 5½, slippery. A bed occupies the whole cell. There one is isolated, completely without communication, all rights are lost, one eats on the floor, they take out the mattresses at 7 and give them out at 22, they take us twice a day to the bathroom, and they submit us to the life of an animal. The Prison says that this serves to make us think. The sentence is between 5 and 30 days. Companions were taken there for refusing to be stripped naked for a body search, others for not allowing vaginal searches to be made on them, others for making a doll out of bread crumbs. As you can see, the reasons are not predictable and the punishment brutal. The isolation, the absolute incommunication are degrading in their inhumanity, and as such thought of by the civilized nations legislations.

Searches

From time to time we are summoned by the personnel of this section. In a brutal climate our clothes are taken away, and in the meantime they look at our belongings, take away our letters, clothes, paintings, books, etc. The plunder is usual, those in charge take away things we are entitled to. Security Chief HORACIO MARTIN GALINDEZ showed us a copy of Article Decree 2023 that puts them in charge of our bodies. "If we have to put a finger in the vagina, we'll do it" After every summons the feeling of violation, deprivation is brutal. Those things they take away from us give us some semblance of dignity. The women prisoners from Cordoba were

by army officials who searched their vaginas. Here we will defend our dignity as long as we have the strength and the support of the people.

Barreteros

These are the masculine personnel of SAF that daily come to our cells to control and inspect "the state of the bars." Surely this is another type of violence. We have to leave the cell, bend our heads, put our hands behind our backs. The barreteros inspect and take away our things.

Restriction:

This situation as far as we can tell, consists in taking away totally all of our rights. They suspend recreation, visits, correspondence, newspapers, packages, provisions. It signifies total isolation and incommunication. They don't explain its character, only that these are "military orders", and according to GALINDEZ in repression for the acts perpetrated by the People in the streets. "You are Hostages" he told us. In other prisons of the country inmates have passed months in restriction: Mendoza, Resistencia, Cordoba, Coronda, Salta, etc. During these periods we are completely in their hands, and they were taken advantage of to produce the simulated escapes and massive shootings despues, and the disappearance of companions. Thus it can be shown that the Federal Penitentiary Service gives no guarantee for our lives.

Now we will explain the Regime according to Building, since their differences are great;

Building 6

There women prisoners live in cell-blocks. They put 23 persons in the space for 12. Beds piled up, no furniture, no chairs, no tables. Closed in 23 hours in the cell-block. The sanitary installations are insufficient and this causes hygienic problems. We go down for recreation into a small court yard all piled together. Since everyone comes from prisons in the interior of the country where the treatment is much worse, the Prison submits them to a treatment much more threatening and violent than those who are housed in Building 5, since we are now old hands at their treatment and we fight with them. This even the meals are inferior to ours and the treatment much more inhuman.

The Visiting room

The place where they receive visitors is very small, and there in lines which reach up to 100 persons they have to speak, shouting or taking turns. At night they are kept with a "sleeping light" a light bulb of 20 to 60 watts, painted. In this manner they can't even enjoy healing sleep.

Building 5

5 floors (the fifth is where the punishment cells are found) In each block, 23 cells with 4 beds bolted to the wall. Each cell has a toilet without water and a basin with a faucet. A small window to which it is forbidden to climb, makes up the place where 4 companions remain 18 hours each day. There is not even the essential living space, nor healthful conditions, since in these 3,70 m. x 2,40 m. we eat and sleep and take care of our necessities. We leave them for inside recreation in a big central area from 9 to 12 and from 15 to 18. Between these hours there is also outside recreation. Sometimes the heat is suffocating now, we are observing that our pressure goes down, we

lose our appetites, our energy, we are tired and sleepy. All these are signs of the deterioration produced by being locked up in a cell. This type of building served before for common prisoners who spent the whole day working in workshops or in the open air. It was made for a regime of open cells, its actual use is a violation of human

rights. The central tables of the open area can only be used to write on. We eat inside the cells seated on the beds. We do not have enough plates or silver ware. The little bit we are getting together is what our families are able to get to us after long attempts in the search section. The guards listen to our conversations, they spy on us by looking through peep holes, the vigilance is constant. At night they put the light out at 22 o'clock and the hours of silence start. But this is not the end of the control. They put the light on and off, a known type of torture. Recuperative sleep is impossible. Cell searches are common: upon returning from recreation outside each day, we find 1 or 2 cells overturned and our meager belongings missing. What is more the companions who do not go down to the patio for various reasons, are closed into their cells so that they don't keep the guards from making these procedures of violation. They handle us in the purest racist style. To get us up, to leave for recreation, to announce the meal, etc. with whistles. The sensation of violation and degradation is very deteriorating.

to be treated as a thing

The Visiting rooms with windows and telephones

They are diabolical. Planned using science and technology to destroy the human person, his affectivity and his sentiments. 68 compartments with plastic walls, a bench divided into two by a glass window, and a telephone to talk with and a stool on either side. There we receive the visit of our loved ones (the same has been done for the past two years in the Rawson-Chubut jail, where our male counterparts, our companions, are housed). We are not able to touch our children, we are not able to transmit our sentiments or our ideas, except by means of a microphone. Thus the possibility of establishing an affective relationship with our little children who, because of their age cannot speak, is denied. How can an affective relationship be built? They are not able to know us, to give or to receive the expressions of love, which are given through physical touch. To what point do they wish to reach in the destruction of human rights? The system is immoral, illegal, terrifying in its misery.

The Mothers' Cell-block

It is Number 49. 21 meters x 2 meters with windows 6 feet from the floor, which are closed in with glass so that there is no air ventilation. Bathrooms, washing sink and kitchen are all in the same area, with only one toilet that is usable. It is filled with all kinds of pests and insects, including rats. It has never been thoroughly disinfected. There is no water. From the showers only enough escapes to wash the dishes, the clothing and the babies. There are entire days in which the water is turned off and there is not even any for the baby bottles. Our companions, the Mothers, bathe at night at the risk of being punished. Just the same as the rest of us, the mothers go outside into the fresh air with their babies only one hour a day.

The food is the same as in the rest of the prison, for which reason the companions who are nursing show the consequences, very obvious anemia. The babies who begin to eat solids are given no vegetables nor adequate fruit. What comes into the prison in packages is limited and depends on the "criteria" of the guard on duty. Most of our companions who are mothers are from the interior and thus there is one to bring them packages.

Medical assistance

Our companions who are about to give birth in the HP are left go after the 3rd day and go into the cell-block where there are always an average of 20 mothers and 10 babies. Their stitches become infected, they become

weakened, there is no medicine for them nor desinfectante for their hygiene. The doctors and nurses simply don't listen and when the patients are finally able to get an analysis taken, the results are always "normal". The pediatrician comes every day, but "if there isn't any money in the account" of our companions, there is no treatment. If the babies become ill on holidays, there is no pediatrician. There is no immunization program "not even against polio".--Decree 955/76 determines that the babies stay with their mothers is limited to the first few months of life. It is of value to comment on the significance of this, since the former penal code permitted the prisoners to keep their babies until 2 years of age. It is a violation of human rights (HCP has a ward for political prisoners and one for common prisoners, an operating room and an X-Ray room and offices).

In the ward are 25 beds where the new mothers are mixed with the women sick from infectious-contagious diseases.

The ventilation is insufficient, there are 2 bathrooms of which one functions with two toilets, a wash bowl and a shower.

The patients themselves clean the ward and if they are not able to do so because of their condition, it is left dirty.

The sheets are changed every 20 days or more. The food is the same as in the rest of the prison: boiled dishes without meat, with grease and cabbage. We attend our sick companions ourselves: we control the intervenous feeding, we wash them and tend their wounds, etc. The analysis that are taken inevitably come out "normal". It is so bad that from one of our companions they still hadn't taken the urine specimen, nor the blood sample when they gave her the report with "excellent results". This shows the laziness, incompetence, and criminal negligence with which the professionals in charge of our health exercise their functions.

The births are attended by whatever doctor, nurse or guard is around at the moment. The incubator, just newly arrived is "losing heat". The Chief of the ward, DOCTOR GONZALEZ (a woman) is an example of incompetence and lack of commitment in regard to our health.

We can affirm at this stage of development of all that is happening in our country that nothing happens by accident. The great deficiencies in our health care can not be by accident. The medical attention we are given in the prison is a part of the planned and systematic objective, to achieve our destruction. We have tried to show in this denunciation a general vision of our situation here. We have only touched those points must universally true. In the tiny details, which you can intuitively deduce, you can know the misery of this regime and the inhumanity of its content, and the clarity of its objectives. The actual holders of power will have to render accounts to the people for their crimes against humanity.

We denounce it because the Argentine people and the people of the world have a right to know this aspect of the actuation of the badly named Armed Forces who are frightened because the entire world accuses them of assassination, kidnapping, torture, and human destruction in order to achieve their purposes.

The people in prison denounce it.

POLITICAL PRISONERS OF VILLA DEVOTO
January, 1977

NOTE: The ages of our companions are between 16 and 70 years.